

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-5041

1. Name

Historic 630 – 678 Melvin Street
and / common

2. Location

street & number 630 – 678 Melvin Street
city, town Baltimore
state & zip code Maryland 21205 county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name
street & number telephone
city, town state & zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records liber
street & number Clarence Mitchell Courthouse folio
city, town Baltimore State Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title
date federal state county local
depository for survey records
city, town state & zip code

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check One

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check One

☒ original site
☐ moved:
date of move: _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This row of twenty-five two-bay-wide, two-story brick houses with low-pitched gable roofs are typical of the small alley houses built in Baltimore in the 1850s and 1860s, often along especially narrow secondary alley streets running perpendicularly off the main "alley" street. Most of the houses retain their original brick facades, which were always painted; others have been covered with formstone. Some of the houses have Italianate-style wooden cornices, put on at a later date.

The houses are two stories in height, 11' and 12' wide (15' for the east end house [630] and 13' for the west end house [678]) and occupy lots 50' deep. Each house has a one-story brick rear kitchen addition somewhat narrower than the house. The pitch of the gable roof is especially low, a characteristic of this particular type of two-story, gable-roofed alley house. The houses are constructed in common bond, and were originally painted. Originally each house had a simple brick corbelled cornice, but some have been replaced with later Italianate-style scroll-sawn wooden bracketed cornices or are obscured by the formstone covering. Chimneys are located at the rear end of the kitchen addition.

The door and window openings have flat wood lintels and sills. One set of original 2/2 sash remains (at 634 Melvin St.) but other windows are filled with either 1/1 or 6/6 replacement sash. Doorways have single-light transoms and are filled with a variety of replacement door styles, many of which are modern six-panel doors. The houses sit on low basements, lit by a single-light sash. The entrances are reached by three, four, or five wooden, concrete or brick steps, depending on the incline of the street.

The houses are basically two rooms deep, with the front room being entered directly from the front door. The front and back rooms of the first floor are separated by a wide opening, with the tightly winding, narrow stairs set in the rear room, in the space between the partition wall and the fireplace. The one-story rear addition served as the kitchen, with its own cooking fireplace.

8. Significance

Period	Area of significance	check one & justify			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theatre	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other: specify	

Specific dates c. 1850 - 1860

Builder/Architect

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

These houses are significant as representing a relatively plain type of small street house that was constructed to provide inexpensive housing for the working class residents of the area, most of whom were German or Irish at the time of construction. The houses were built according to a pattern that was quite common to the city's working class neighborhoods of the middle and late nineteenth century. Recognizing that workers held different levels of jobs (and pay), builders created a hierarchy of house sizes (and prices) in the new neighborhoods going up to serve the expanding factory districts ringing the harbor and north-east and southwest of the central city. Builders acquired anywhere from an eighth to a half of a city block and built 14' to 15'-wide two-story houses on the main streets, and smaller, 11' to 13'-wide two-story houses on the narrower streets bisecting the blocks. Typically, in this period, main street houses might sell \$1,000 - \$1,500; small street houses for \$600 - \$800. Occasionally, the builder retained ownership of his small street houses to provide income for himself as rental properties. In this way people of varying means could afford to live in the same block. If they couldn't afford the purchase price of the small street houses, then they *could* afford the \$8 or so a month it would cost to rent one, while they saved to be able to buy their own home later.

The houses are especially significant because of their proximity to the Baltimore & Ohio railroad yards, the nation's first railroad, and its related railroad-oriented industries, like car and rail shops. Housing of this type was built to provide inexpensive housing for the wide variety of both Irish and German immigrants who came to southwest Baltimore to work in railroad-related industries in the decade before the Civil War.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-5041

9. Major Bibliographic References

Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse*
(New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999)

10. Geographic Data

Acreage of nominated property

Quadrangle name

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name / title Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

Organization The Alley House Project

date

street & number 1306 Carrollton Ave.

telephone

city, town Baltimore

state & zip code Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of property rights.

Return to:

DHCP/DHCD

Maryland Historical Trust

100 Community Place

Crownsville MD 21032-2023

W. LOMBA

B-5041

630-678 Main St.

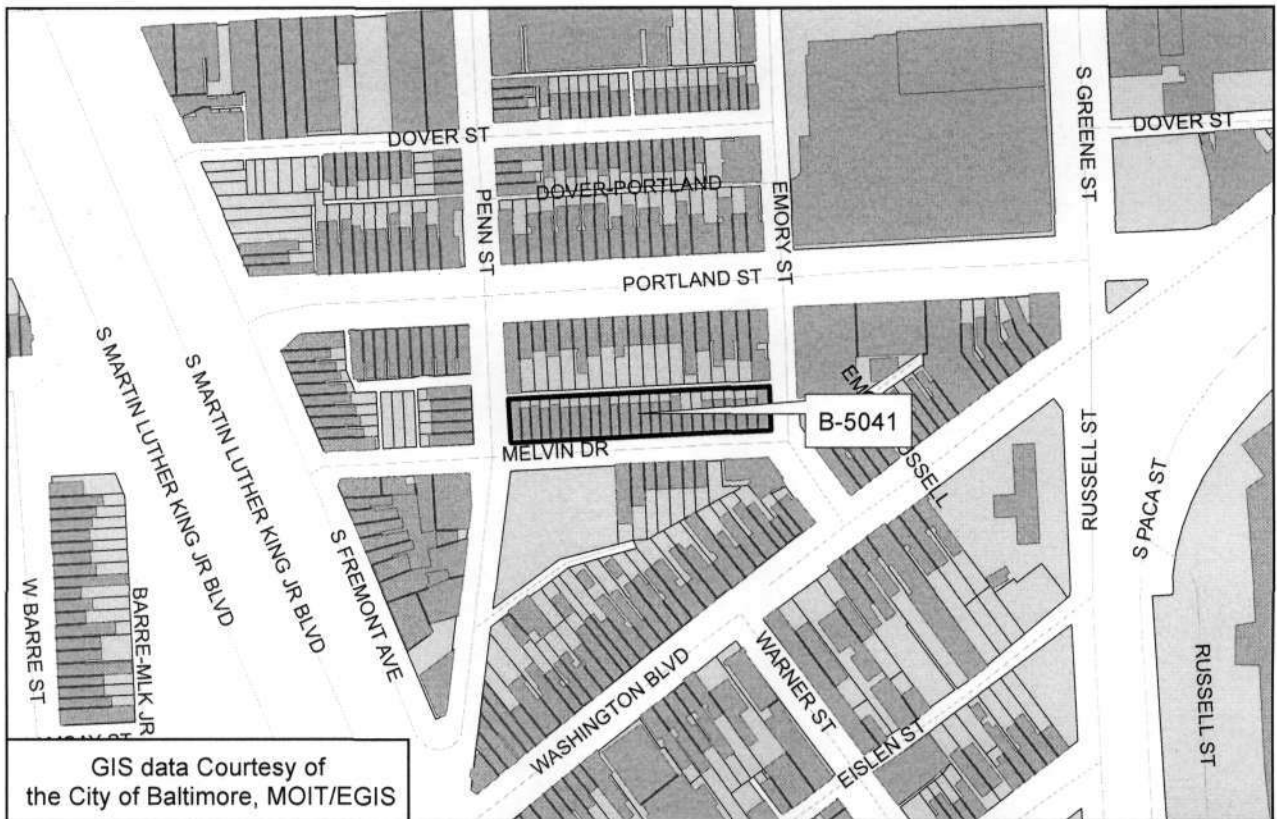
TAUTO. 113

60

ST



B-5041
630-678 Melvin Drive
Block 0685A Lots 089-113
Baltimore City
Baltimore West Quad





632-678 Melvin

PWTB-1

E-1041

632-678 Melvin 7.

BALTO. MD

C. Belfrage

2/98

MD SHPO

1/3

100

100000-4



630 Melvin
SWB-1

B-5041

630-678 Melvin St.

BALTO. MD

C. Belfrage

2/98

2/3

202 MAR 2 1998



652 Melvin

SWB-1

B-5041

630-678 Melvin St.

BALTO. MD

C. Belfrage

2/48

3/3

105384